

ROGGENKAMP FAMILY

Lee A. Roggenkamp, 1935–1964, (28); Rhonie, 1956–1964, (8); Rusty, 1957–1964, (7)
Robie, 1959–1964, (4); Ryan, 1961–1964, (2); Jean Marie Vandenberghe, friend, 1955–1964. (8)

That day will live forever in the hearts and minds of many.

It began with joy and ended with utter heartbreak.

It was a day that would change Mya's life forever.

It was Sunday, April 19, 1964. The Roggenkamps, Lee and Mya Roggenkamp, and their four young children awoke to a joyful day, because daddy was taking them all on a plane ride—one of their favorite things to do as a family. Rhonie was even going to take along a friend, Jean Marie Vandenberghe. Mya decided to stay behind. She vividly remembers their smiling faces – she knew how excited they were for this time with daddy, their pilot – as they waved to her from the back of the car as they drove the short distance to the airport.

She waited expectantly for their Stinson four-place plane to come into view as it ascended into the heavenly sky. She continued watching as Lee circled their Larch Mountain home, once, then twice, showing her that they were aware of her presence and would be returning soon to their devoted wife and mother. Mya halfway wished she had chosen to join them.

Then she heard the plane's engine sputter and knew something was horribly wrong. She couldn't believe what she was seeing and watched, helplessly, as the plane silently nose-dived straight down into the tall stand of fir trees below. It seemed as if even the birds stopped their song in utter sorrow, the silence of disbelief echoing over the hillside.

Mya desperately tried to get to her precious family, but there was nothing that could be done. Rescuers found the demolished plane torn to shreds, embedded in the overgrown brush. There were no survivors among the debris. People leaving Sunday School services at the church next door tried to comfort and console Mya as she sobbed, "Oh God, don't take them away from me." The days and months that followed were filled with uncertainty, emptiness and tears. The entire community shared in her overwhelming sorrow and tears.

How does any human being ever accept such a tragedy and go on with any quality of life? There was one tiny ray of hope—one reason to live—a small, unborn baby nestled and growing in her womb, also desperately needing to be nurtured with love and assurance that life must go on—a baby girl, born just 8 months later, to be called Angel.

(Angel was just married on July 4, 2010 in a beautiful wedding.)

**Note. Virginia Warren and I called Mya and asked to interview her for this story, over a year ago. She was the first person on our list as we began this cemetery tour project, and we were not sure what to expect, or how we would be accepted in our quest for such emotional information. She graciously welcomed us into her beautiful home. Her confident yet gentle manner exuded a heavenly inner beauty that radiated and encircled us, and we became enthralled as she quietly shared her story. She told us that although her prayers and faith were put to the ultimate test, God, in his infinite wisdom and love, gave her the strength and courage to deal with her broken heart. Years have passed. Memories are still embedded in her mind and soul, but she continues to be a caring, courageous and remarkable woman!*

~Eunice Abrahamsen